Like a Cry at the Final Breath That is Dawn

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Like a Cry at the Final Breath That is Dawn

by GammaCapNashira

Summary

It's been four years since Will Graham was committed to a mental hospital and subsequently shuttled all over the East Coast. Hazy from the drugs and haunted by visions of violence both from his and others past, followed by the image of a stag, he finally ends up at a hospital comandeered by one Fredrick Chilton.

Hannibal Lecter has grown tired of killing, if he could ever imagine such a thing, when a certain case catches his eyes. Determined to understand and pick apart this strange man, Hannibal finds himself in love with the figure that might contain as much darkness as he, and resolves to help Will Graham shed his person-suit and blossom into the creature he was meant to become.

PSA I have watched Two (2) episodes of Hannibal so everything might be absolutely wonky.

Notes

There's a lot going on in here. Huge shoutout to my two wonderful betas who have helped me make sure this makes as much sense as it can. I listened to dispatch, Lord huron, Hozier, and Mitski on repeat while writing this. Hope you enjoy <3

Sharp and Inglorious Thorn

Will looked out over the trees. They weren't a real forest, he knew they were in a city somewhere. Where, he couldn't say. Between the helicopters, armored cars, endless white rooms piling up in a haze of memory, he could be anywhere. He couldn't move, couldn't feel his body below his neck, or above it for that matter. He was just his mind, and even that was foggy. He breathed in deep and swore he could smell the trees, the rich scent of pine needles and earth. Will closed his eyes. They would be gone when he opened them.

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Hannibal Lecter, doctor and psychiatrist, learned about William Graham over lunch. He was meeting with a colleague, keeping up appearances really. He didn't care for the man. Not because he was dangerous, but because he had no real danger to him. Frederick Chilton would never kill with his own hands, even though there was blood on them undoubtedly.

"He's supposedly very unstable," Chilton said. Hannibal wondered if Chilton cared that these talks were against the law. Hannibal didn't, given what they had just finished eating. "They draw lots to see who has to deal with him."

The food had been finished and they were just enjoying dark glasses of wine and their own company. Or rather, Chilton was. Hannibal listened because Chilton was important. He was just on the edge for Hannibal. Not quite interesting enough that Hannibal wanted to keep him around, not as rude or uncouth as pigs. But under the surface Chilton wasn't exactly human. He had the mark of a killer about him. Hannibal wondered how many patients had "languished" under his care. He reminded Hannibal of a weasel in some ways, lithe and slinky, small in stature but large of teeth.

"You don't seem too worried," Hannibal observes. Chilton has almost finished his wine, whereas Hannibal has merely been sipping his.

"He'll break," Chilton chuckles darkly. "They all do eventually. But I must admit he has quite the impressive resume."

Hannibal waits for Chilton to continue. He likes drawing these things out, like anything he has to say is of importance.

"He bit an orderly," Chilton says after a sip of wine. "Took a chunk out of her arm. That's why he was transferred."

Hannibal raises an eyebrow at him over his glass. "Hardly seems unusual. You see violent patients all the time. Why is everyone so scared of him?"

Chilton shakes his head. "I've read his file. Some days he's lucid, completely normal. And then at the drop of a hat… he changes. Like a wild animal." Chilton takes a pause. "And he killed someone."

"Who?" Hannibal asks.

"His daughter."

Hannibal hums over his glass. "Interesting."

"He was committed instead of going to jail," Chilton explains, "Man's mad as a hatter."

Hannibal listens to Chilton, but his mind is elsewhere. He feels something inside him tug at the idea of this man, locked in the state hospital. It's the first time in a long time something has interested him. It turns out that even something once as thrilling as murder eventually becomes banal. As routine as collecting eggs or slaughtering the roosters. Hannibal swirls his wine and thinks of how to find William Graham.

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In the end it's easy. All he needs is a good word here or there, and mostly to wait. Chilton isn't working with Will directly, Hannibal learns, just some woman. Chilton wanted the case, but wasn't able to take any more patients. He and Hannibal were waiting for the same opportunity, for the other doctor to falter, like wolves waiting for the sick deer to stumble. And it was Hannibal who took the kill.

The hospital is nestled in a sort of artificial forest. The edges beyond the parking lot have been shored up, tall trees reaching for the overcast sky. Hannibal was just here today to pick up Will's files, and to reacquaint himself with the hospital. He had worked here years ago, when he was young, when he had different ideals. Before he set out on his own. It seemed fitting then that he would step back inside entirely for himself, just as he had when he left.

The hospital smelled of chemicals and something deeper, a sense of quiet in the air that permeated the air and sunk into the floor, clinging to people's coats and skin. Like ash. The paperwork was waiting for him when he got to the fifth floor, shoes clicking muffledly against the tiles. The secretary gave it to him when she saw his ID without a word, being on the phone.

This floor was nearly silent. Hannibal knew most of the patients here were confined to their rooms, or otherwise occupied behind closed doors. It was a prison in many sense of the word. Hannibal hated it here. Spidery veins of red tape permeated this place. If he was to get what he wanted he would have to play their game, thrum the webbing and hope something larger didn't eat him. Though that would be difficult. Hannibal knew from experience he was hard to kill.

As he was leaving, something caught Hannibal's eye. It was fast, a glimpse of something flashing. Hannibal took a second look. It was a man, sitting in a hospital chair by a window. What Hannibal had seen was the light reflecting off his face, the lower half of which was muzzled in a clear plastic. An IV bag is attached to his chair by a pole, the line snaking down to the man's wrist, cuffed to the arm of the wheelchair. Hannibal knew he couldn't stay, couldn't approach him until he was allowed to. The feet between them seemed to stretch into miles as the man looked at Hannibal, their eyes meeting. His eyes were colorless, reflecting the light around them. They looked green now, reflecting the light off the trees. That's all Hannibal could see at this distance.

Hannibal folded his coat closer to himself and wrenched away from the man in the wheelchair. He would have to check his file, but he knew for certain still that the man had been who he came here to see, who he was willing to throw himself back into this white sterile place for. For the chance at something interesting. In those moments as he was riding

the rickety elevator down to the first floor, emerging into the tree-lined parking lot, Hannibal knew he made the right choice.

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Will closed his eyes. He hadn't seen that man before. In his mind he tried to hold on, to keep the image close but it was fading. Silvery blond hair, brown eyes, a long plum trench coat over a blue suit. He caught a wiff of something, under the fog, under the buzz of a thousand people screaming. A memory comes to him. Or perhaps a dream. He is in the water, up to his knees, at the edge of a clearing. An elk passes between the trees, stepping out. It dips its head, rooting with its antlers before straightening, looking directly at Will. The water dripping from its magnificent head turns black, running in rivulets down its face. In its mouth is a human arm, severed, dripping the same black substance. Not black. Red.

Will wakes with a start. It's raining. There's an orderly approaching him. She's the one he hates the least. She's gentle with him, but he can feel it running off her in waves, like the deer. He looks at her as she starts to wheel him back to his room. He watches as her dark skin slowly fades away, revealing only a charred and burned husk. The blood drips onto his shoulder and he shudders. Or he would, if he could move.

Will catches another glimpse of something down the hall as they turn into his room. The leg and tail of a deer rounding the corner.

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Hannibal sets down his glass on his desk. In the center of the dark burnished wood is a simple manila envelope. Deceptive. Hannibal seats himself, untucking his suit jacket from underneath himself meticulously, and opens the folder.

The first page has an image of a man in the corner. Hannibal recognizes it at once as the man he saw at the hospital. William Graham. This picture was taken when he was admitted. Hannibal studies it closely. There's some clear differences, for one he isn't muzzled. There's a spark behind his eyes, which Hannibal saw in the hospital, but it burns even brighter here. A fleck of madness, like a spark in the darkness. Or rather, the darkness inside a spark.

Hannibal flips through the pages and pages of notes idly, skimming for what he's looking for. Will has been treated for encephalitis, but it seems that didn't stop his hallucinations. There's a laundry list of diagnoses, ranging from autism spectrum to pychosis and schizophrenia and even one investigation of antisocial personality disorder. Hannibal sips his wine and continues down the rabbit hole. Will has been committed for six years. His condition is worsening. He's been bounced around the country, finally landing again on the East Coast in Massachusetts, not too terribly far from his old home in Wolf Trap Virginia, where he was living before he came to the first of many institutions.

After reading Hannibal stands up and walks the length of his living room, thinking. Will seems promising. Perhaps it is the simple boredom of growing old, but Hannibal wonders if this boy might be what he has been craving, waiting for.

Hannibal finishes his drink and heads for the bedroom. His first session with Will is tomorrow. Hannibal can't wait to meet the man with those haunting blue eyes.

The Hedgerows

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal crosses the threshold once more, feeling again the sense of tiredness that permeates the building like snow piling on a roof. He's warned by a nurse before he enters Will's room that he is liable to move suddenly and change on a dime. Hannibal assures him that he can handle it.

Inside the room is sparse. Nothing that isn't battened down, nothing with a straight flat surface, the bathroom having the bottom cut off so the nurses could observe the person inside. There are no curtains, only slats that can be closed with a lever, too small to grasp in any meaningful way.

And next to the window, in his wheelchair, is Will Graham. The IV attached by a pole to his chair catches the light, scattering it across his face. Hannibal approaches carefully, telegraphing his movements wordlessly. He sits near Will, but does not speak to him yet. Hannibal approaches Will as one might a feral animal. He simply observes the other man for a while. His beard is growing out, wiry and straight, unlike his dark hair, which spills over his face like water. His eyes turn to look at Hannibal, followed minutely by his head, but only barely. He's bound, from the neck down, his arm not cuffed is tucked around him in sort of half a straightjacket. Hannibal looks into those eyes, reflecting more of the blue of the sky today. There's something there, a flash of intelligence, of danger.

"William Graham," Hannibal says. Will flinches, minutely. Hannibal can only see it for how close he is looking, peering down the deep well. "Will then." Will seems to relax. "I am your new psychiatrist. My name is Doctor Hannibal Lecter."

Will looks at him definitely, as defiantly as he can. Hannibal smiles.

"Can you speak?" Hannibal asks. Will responds by looking away, back at the trees. Hannibal continues, setting a hand on Will's chair, "I want to be your friend, Will. I want to get to know you, so I might help you get better."

They sit like that for a while. Hannibal just wants Will to become comfortable with him. He's a patient man. Hannibal simply sits with Will for their first hour. When that hour is up, Hannibal goes to stand, to collect himself and go.

"It doesn't work." The voice is small, slurred, blurry. Hannibal turns around. Will hasn't moved, not an inch. Hannibal waits. The voice again, sharp, even as it is weak, like a starving animal still trying to bite even as the light fades from it. "Therapy... doesn't work… on me."

Hannibal smiles. "It will. If you let it."

***

The stag visits Will in the hospital. No, not the elk. This one is different. He is in human form, only for a moment can Will see his antlers, the deep black pits of his eyes. And yet Will can sense it. The clack of hooves on the tile floors. And when it reaches for him he can feel the blood on its hands.

When the elk goes to leave, Will finds his voice. He almost coughs from how unused it is, like a cloud of dust but coming from inside him. He wants the elk to know he isn't afraid. He has weathered every storm they have sent at him. Will refuses to break for them.

***

Hannibal comes back in a few days. They decided biweekly would work best, since none of the others wanted to come near him and Hannibal had his own patients to tend to. The hospital didn't seem to care what Hannibal did with him, content to let him rot in silence in that room. Hannibal made it his mission to draw Will out of his shell. He wouldn't let Will languish any longer.

When Hannibal arrives at the hospital he stops the Doctor in charge of patients on the floor. She isn't hard to find. Her coat is blue, the others are white. She seems to almost melt into the blue floor at times, standing just right in the right light.

“Doctor Lee,” Hannibal says, approaching the nurse.

“Doctor Lecter,” Doctor Alana Bloom agrees. They shake hands. Alana and Hannibal knew each other, long ago, in another life. “Are you here to see Graham?”

“I am,” Hannibal says.

“You have seen him once already, correct?” Alana says.

Alana is a calm woman, unshakable. Hannibal knows from the set of her jaw that she would protect these patients with her life. It was one of the most drawing things, when he mentored her. They were distant now, more distant in the hospital with the air of work around them. Alana was like a hyena matriarch, protective of her own but quick to snap the necks of those who threaten her pack.

“I have,” Hannibal says, “He seems excessively lethargic. I wanted to ask about the sedative he’s being given.”

“It’s nonnegotiable,” Alana says. Hannibal sees quickly that those who threaten her colony include the colony members themselves. “You’ve read what he’s capable of. I won’t risk it.”

“I am afraid he will not progress until he is more aware,” Hannibal says, “He can barely speak, surely that is excessive Alana.” He slips her name, trying to impart to her how important this matter is.

Alana sighs and sets down her pen, where she was writing on a desk in the hallway. She rubs her eyes with one hand.

“I will think about it,” Alana says after a moment. “But if anything happens it is on your head. I’m already swamped and Doctor Chilton is running us to the bone out here.”

“Thank you Doctor Bloom,” Hannibal says, smiling placatingly. “I will go see Mr. Graham now.”

Hannibal turns, ready to walk away, when Lee’s voice catches him. “Hannibal!”

“Be careful with him. I am… afraid he may shatter.”

Hannibal smiles, real this time. “I will be sure to be gentle with him.” Hannibal pauses. “It has been so long, Alana. I must invite you for dinner some time, again. Like before.”

“I’ll see,” Alana says. There’s a smile creasing the edges of her tired face.

“You have many things to see to,” Hannibal says, “I will leave you to them.”

Alana doesn’t stop him this time. Hannibal takes his leave and clicks down the hall to Will’s room. He isn’t there. Hannibal continues down the hall until he finds the same nook he had seen Will in on that first day. He’s there again. His eyes are closed. Hannibal approaches carefully. With the overcast light coming in through the huge windows Will looks pale, like the ivory skin of the dead, almost translucent.

“Will,” Hannibal says gently. Will’s eyes snap open. He has more spark in them than before. Which Hannibal appreciates. Will’s breath fogs his bite mask. Hannibal sits down. “I spoke with Dr. Bloom.”

“Glass… Woman…” Will says slowly. His voice is rough, scraping across his vocal chords like metal over a grater.

“Glass woman,” Hannibal repeats. “I don’t think I’d call her that fragile, but tell me why you think that, Will.”

Will's eyes flash again and he struggles to speak, "Not fragile… Glass… In her skin… thrown out a window."

Hannibal nods. At the start it's best to indulge a patient's unreality. Not doing so will only cause the barbs to dig in deeper, the struggle only widening the gap between reality and hallucination.

"Do you see everyone this way?" Hannibal asks.

Will nods slowly. It seems to take a lot of effort. His eyes flick to a nurse passing by, a short woman with black hair and dark skin.

"Burning," Will says slowly. He nods at another nurse, one Hannibal hadn't seen before, a tall man with feathery blond hair and green eyes. "Blood… On his shirt… Gunshot."

"You see them dying," Hannibal says. "Tell me Will, do you fear dying?"

Will slowly shakes his head. "No."

Hannibal nods. "Do you see my death?"

Will seems to study him for a moment before answering. "No. Stag… inside. Human suit."

Hannibal feels a little thrill run down his spine. Will can see his person suit. More than that he can see under it, to what lies beneath.

"What else do you see, Will," Hannibal asks, his voice soft.

"The stag…" Will says. He seems tired as he says, "Dream… about him."

“Tell me about your dream.”

“In the swamp… holding,” Will seems to be struggling to stay awake now. “Holding a human arm.”

Hannibal doesn’t speak for a moment, and Will says, his eyes alive even as his head sags, “Do you think... I’m crazy… Dr. Lecter?”

“No,” Hannibal says with a smile. “I think you are right.”

Hannibal gathers his coat and stands. “Thank you for your time, Will. We will be speaking again soon.”

***

Alana arrives food dinner before Hannibal’s next session with Will. Hannibal takes her coat to the coat closet before bringing out the soup and sides. She looks tired, her hair down but a bit frizzy. Hannibal is sure she came directly from the hospital. Hannibal sits across from her in the dining room.

“Seolleongtang,” Hannibal says, “Ox bone soup, with somyeon glass noodles and stir fried fish cakes. You can add the scallions and seasoning to taste, though there is a bit of salt in the broth already.”

“Thank you Hannibal,” Alana says. “Smells great, as always.”

“I thought the bone broth might be comforting,” Hannibal says, adding some scallions from his own plate to the milky white broth, “Some people say it can also boost your immune system.”

“It’s untested,” Alana finishes, taking a sip, “But it is comforting.”

“You get the milkiness from boiling the bones quickly,” Hannibal adds, “The cloudiness is sometimes considered the sign of an untrained cook, but for ox bone soup it is the desired effect.”

They eat in silence for a while. Hannibal gazes across at Alana and wonders why Will would see her as being imbedded with glass.

“Do you have a fear of heights?” Hannibal asks.

“Why are you asking?” Alana says, looking at him over a spoonful of broth.

“Just curious,” Hannibal says.

“It’s because of Will Graham,” Alana surmises. “Isn’t it.”

“He calls you the glass woman,” Hannibal says. “Says you were thrown out a window.”

“I was,” Alana says, setting down her spoon and trying some of the fish cakes, “After you left the hospital. A patient who had been released found my apartment. Thank god we were only on the second floor.”

Hannibal stores this information away for later.

“I’m sorry to hear that,” Hannibal says. “And yet you still work with unstable patients.”

“Trust me it’s been hard,” Alana says with a little dark chuckle. “I keep my work life and home life extremely separate. Not that I wasn’t before.”

“I trust your judgement,” Hannibal says.

“So he talked to you,” Alana says, “Will, I mean.”

“He has,” Hannibal says, “A few times. It seems difficult for him.”

“We’re dropping his sedative a bit,” Alana says. “Hopefully it helps. He’s only talked to me once.” Alana looks down into her soup. “He said he was sorry someone threw me out a window.”

“He gets right down to brass tacks, doesn’t he,” Hannibal says.

“I don’t know how he knew,” Alana says.

“These things get around,” Hannibal says. “He may have overheard someone else.”

“Yeah,” Alana says.

They talk a bit more after that, about the things that the other has missed since being apart. At the end of the meal Hannibal fetches Alana’s coat and walks her to her car. It’s only in the driveway but Hannibal sees her shoulders relax a bit. As she drives away Hannibal repeats what Alana said again to himself. *I don’t know how he knew.*

***

Will stands in the swamp. The elk is there, dripping from the blood that has replaced the water in the bayou. It munches away on plants, rivulets of red dripping down its beard. A bird flies to it, a shrike, though it seems a bit larger than a shike normally would be. In its claws is a rat, and Will watches from the trees as it impales the rodent on one of the elk’s antlers. The

elk stands perfectly still as the shrike tears the rat apart, bits of fur fluttering down past the elk's dark eyes.

Will wakes with a start. He's lying in his bed in the hospital. He realizes that he can move his head. Will turns and his eyes land on his IV drip. He raises an arm slowly, shakily. Not to do anything, just to see if he could. Will finds he can. Not as far as he would like, as both arms are cuffed to the iron bars coming up like a crib. Will lays back against the pillows. A bird lands on a branch outside the window. There's a band of black across its eyes. A shrike.

Chapter End Notes

i thought i had a lot stockpiled but i absolutely do not. there will be another chapter posted on Tuesday, and hopefully next Friday. Thank you so much for the kudos and bookmarks, they feed the artist.

What Ground I Was Founded

Chapter Notes

And here my dears is the violence >:3c

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal sketches Will before their next meeting. He almost doesn't mean to, but he cannot shake the image of Will sitting in the light of the overcast sky, watching the trees sway in the wind. Hannibal gazes down at the pencil drawing, deciding he hasn't quite managed to capture Will's beauty. But he leaves it nonetheless, hoping to make a better sketch at some point.

Will is awake when Hannibal visits, lying in his bed. Hannibal notices the cuff on his wrists connected to the bars on his bed, wearing his bite mask. His hair is unkempt, getting long, brushing his shoulders, draped in blue fabric that seems too large on his frame.

"Good afternoon Will," Hannibal says. Will turns to look at him, clearly more alert than before. His eyes are sharp, hooded as they are with both their deep set and the dark circles ringing them.

"Is it?" Will huffs, looking back out the window. His voice is bright and clear, just as biting as his gaze. "There isn't a clock here."

"I could have them bring you one," Hannibal says, taking a seat next to Will's bed. "If you would like that."

"I would," Will says softly. "I lose enough time as it is."

"You experience time distortion?" Hannibal asks.

“Yeah,” Will says. “Everything is the same here except the sunlight. And the nurses coming to check on me.”

“It must get lonely,” Hannibal says. Will doesn’t answer. Hannibal pulls Will’s file out of his coat. Will’s eyes flick momentarily to it before looking back out the window. “Now that we can converse more freely I’d like to ask you about a few things.”

“That’s what you’re here for,” Will says coldly.

“Indeed,” Hannibal says. “I am here to help you, Will.”

“Yeah,” Will says. Then after chewing his lip a moment, “If I answer your question, will you do something for me?”

“Depends what it is,” Hannibal answers, “But I will do my best to accommodate your request.”

“I want a pair of glasses,” Will says.

“It does not say in your chart that you need them,” Hannibal points out.

“I like having them,” Will says back, still looking out the window. “Blank ones.”

Hannibal files that away for later.

“Very well,” Hannibal says, “I will see if they will let you have them. Now,” Hannibal opens WIll’s file, “Tell me about Abigail Hobbs.”

Will visibly stiffens, and if he could Hannibal assumed Will would have crossed his arms. As it is, it takes WIll a moment to answer.

"You want to know why I did it," Will says softly, coldly, bitterly. "That's all they want to know."

"Just talk to me, Will," Hannibal says gently. "Her favorite color, what she liked to eat, anything like that."

Will takes a deep breath, "I adopted her. When I worked for the FBI. Her father… he was cruel. She was just a kid." Will stops for a minute before continuing. "She had this tabby cat stuffed animal. A nurse gave it to her when she was recovering… from whatever her father did to her. She never let the thing go. She called it Tabiquoi. I have no idea where she got the name from. She'd carry it with her everywhere."

"She sounds lovely," Hannibal says.

"She was," Will says. Hannibal can hear the grief in his voice. "She was… radiant. Wanted to be a med student. Help people."

"I don't think she would have wanted you to blame yourself, Will," Hannibal says.

"You don't have a clue what she'd want," Will snaps, fixing Hannibal with his piercing blue eyes. He looks out the window again. "I stabbed her. Six times. Pushed her down the stairs. Two flights. Pure concrete. She cracked her head on the way down. Dunno if that's what killed her but she had a frontoparietal depressed fracture and broke her arm in two places."

Hannibal doesn't ask more than that. They sit together in silence for a while before he takes his leave. Will doesn't say anything.

As Hannibal is leaving something, a whim, causes him to ask, "May I draw you, next session?"

Will blinks twice before answering. “Why?”

“I think you are beautiful,” Hannibal says simply.

Will thinks for a moment before saying, “Sure.”

***

They don’t talk for another month. Hannibal visits, occasionally speaking, but it is as if he is talking to himself. Some days they are in Will’s room, some days in the main hall by the window. Hannibal fills his sketchbook with drawings of Will, who makes for a perfect subject, hardly moving except to breathe. Will has more strength now, and as such is tighter confined. Hannibal hates to see it, but Alana insists.

Four weeks since their conversation about Abigail, Hannibal sees why.

Hannibal arrives early, and Alana greets him.

“Will isn’t ready,” Alana says, “They’re giving him a haircut and shave.”

Hannibal cringes inwardly at the idea of Will’s beautiful curls being shorn, but agrees that his beard is becoming unruly.

“May I join them?” Hannibal asks. “I would simply observe.”

“Of course,” Alana says, walking with Hannibal to Will’s room.

Will is strapped down to his wheelchair, arms tightly cuffed to the chair. Two orderlies are finishing with him, his bite mask removed so they can shave his beard. His hair is shorter, but not shaved, which sends a little ripple of relief down Hannibal's spine.

It happens all at once. One of the orderlies nicks Will's cheek as she shaves him. There's a crack, the sound of breaking bones, the pop of a shoulder wrenched out of its socket, a blur of movement, a woman screaming. Blood spurts and splatters the wall, disrupting the expanse of white.

The orderly clutches their arm. One of their fingers has been bitten clean off. The chair is on its side, half dragged under the bed. Will's left arm is still cuffed to it, protruding from the bed at an odd angle. Alana slams the call button. There's a chime over the speakers. The other orderly ushers the crying woman out of the room.

"Dr. Lecter-" Alana starts, but Hannibal is already crouched next to the bed.

Hannibal can make out a form, huddled underneath in the darkness. Will has his knees drawn to his chest. His front is covered in blood, dripping down from his half-shaved face. His eyes are wild, unseeing. His hand not jutting out and bound to the chair is clutched close to himself, but Hannibul can see by the unnatural curve Will broke his thumb to get it out of the cuffs.

"Will," Hannibal says gently. "It's okay. You are safe here."

Will says nothing, but just for a moment Hannibal sees a familiar glint in his eye. Hannibal thinks he's glorious, huddled as he is under the bed, covered in blood. Hannibal wants to ask how it feels, does it exhilarate him? To taste human flesh and blood? To sever bone and sinew with his own body, his own raw strength? But aware that Alana is behind him, watching and worried, Hannibal simply speaks gently.

"Dr Bloom uncuff his other hand," Hannibal says slowly.

"Dr. Lecter are you sure?"

“Do it,” Hannibal says. Alana quickly moves to the other side, Will’s eyes snap to her when she comes into his line of sight. When she unlocks his cuff he draws his arm to his side, but it won’t go all the way, hanging limp at his side. Hannibal speaks to him again. “Your shoulder is dislocated, Will. You will need to come out for us to treat it. I want to help you, Will.”

Will regards Alana with fear. Hannibal turns to her again.

“Dr. Bloom, please leave us for a moment,” Hannibal says. Alana goes to argue but Hannibal stays firm. “Dr. Bloom I need to speak with Will alone.”

Alana steps out of the room. Hannibal shifts into a more sitting position, keeping both his hands open on his lap where Will can see them. Hannibal leans against the wall, not crowding Will’s space.

“You’re beautiful,” Hannibal says softly. “Your strength. I admire it.”

“Not strong,” Will huffs out after a moment. Hannibal didn’t expect him to speak. His voice is so clear, not muffled by the plastic or the straps holding his mouth mostly closed.

“I disagree,” Hannibal says. “You have survived much. You have survived four confusing and long years, and you are blossoming.”

“I just bit off a woman’s finger,” Will hisses. And then with a cold sort of rushing laugh, “And I don’t even know why.”

“And I think you are glorious,” Hannibal says.

After a minute Hannibal sees Will peek his head out from under the bed. In the light Hannibal can see the blood more clearly, already drying and flaking. Will emerges and leans back against the frame, mirroring Hanibal.

“You find beauty in violence,” Will says. It’s an observation.

Hannibal doesn’t deny him. Instead he says, “Your hand is broken. And your shoulder is dislocated.”

“I don’t feel it,” Will says. He sighs and closes his eyes. “I feel tired. And crazy.”

“I don’t think you’re crazy,” Hannibal says.

Will laughs bitterly. “Well only one of us is covered in blood.”

Hannibal wishes he could tell Will, tell him the truth, that he too is covered in years and years of old blood, drying sticky and flaky down to his bones, which are undoubtedly stained deep scarlet. But he doesn’t say anything, not yet. But in that moment Hannibal decides he’s going to break Will out of here, let him spread his wings, test his claws. Hannibal will become Will’s knife, and they will kill together.

“I think you have a gift,” Hannibal says after a moment. “I think you see things others do not. And I think it is wasted in here.”

“Where would I go,” Will says, cracking his eyes open at Hannibal, “Dr. Lecter?”

“Anywhere you want,” Hannibal says.

“Sure,” Will says. “I’ll see you on the plane. I’m sure TSA won’t have an issue with it.”

They sit in silence for a while. Finally Will speaks, his eyes still closed.

“You can let Dr. Bloom back in here. I’m sure they want to sedate me.”

Hannibal stands slowly, very carefully moving to Will’s side. Gingerly he scoops WIll up in his arms. The man is light as if his hospital scrubs were full of matchsticks instead of a 30 year old man. Hannibal feels Will flinch at first, but slowly settle into his arms. He only holds Will for a moment, but Hannibal writes it to memory, stretching it into years, savoring every moment. Hannibal gently sets Will in his hospital bed and goes to the door, letting Alana into the room along with a stream of orderlies. Hannibal catches Will’s gaze as the flow of people forces him out fo the room. He catches a glimpse of those bright blue eyes, and he feels like Will is peeling away all the layers of him, seeing down into his stained bones, as if they were the only two in the whole world. For a moment Hannibal feels like he can see Will too, a sort of ricochet of split light, something dangerous and sharp like the flash of a knife in the moonlight. Hannibal steals away, already rearranging the furniture of his mind to set Will among them, an honored place among his memories.

That night Hannibal kills again, and as he places the fresh liver and kidney into his fridge he rolls his options in his mind. Cuba. They would be safe there. Hannibal closes his store room, pads upstairs to his bedroom. He finishes his nightly routine, humming *Si colmi il calice di vino* . That night he dreams of a shrike, piercing the body of its prey on the antlers of a deer.

***

Will dreams about a house; old, ornate, and creaking. He can hear noise from somewhere, drifting to him from the depths of the house. He walks the corridors making no noise, bare feet cool against the polished wood. A man sits at the piano, unmoving. Somehow Will knows the tune, some deep part of his mind dredging up lyrics in a language he doesn’t speak, weaving and turning over like waves.

Si colmi il calice di vino eletto; Nasca il diletto, muoia il dolor.

Will sees as the man at the piano does and realizes the music is coming from him, from inside them both as he feels them melting together, flowing and changing like silk on the wind. He sees rivulets of blood running across his hands, down his arms, feels the pulse under his fingers sluggishly slowing, the bright red shimmering on his scalpels.

Da noi s’involino gli odi e gli adengi; foleggi e regini qui solo amor…

He looks into the mans eyes and sees amber reflected there, feels his own face splitting in two as he carves the man's eyeballs from his head, cracks open his ribcage and gently lifts his still warm organs from his body. Instead of fear, all Will feels is joy, exhilaration, the thrill of the hunt, as he places the mans body on the piano stool, poising his hands over the keys.

Gustiamo il balsamo d'ogni ferita, che nuova ita ridona al cor Cacciam le torbide cure dal petto; Nasca il diletto muoia il dolor

Will tastes the blood on his tongue. He feels like God.

Chapter End Notes

oh man this is pretty much the last of my stockpile -scrambles-

Fled to the City with So Much Discounted

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal visits Will the next day, on a different floor. He's dressed in his normal subtly plaid suit and trench coat. Will has been transferred to the actual hospital to heal. Hannibal sets down his sketchbook on the rolling side table. This floor smells even more like cleaner, hastily scrubbing away the scents of human suffering.

Will is nestled among the pillows and blankets, his dark hair a thicket against the white. He's heavily sedated, where his eyes don't even open when Hannibal enters. He simply sits in the chair next to Will's bed. Hannibal wonders what he's dreaming about. There's a splint on his shoulder and hand, a bruise on his face from his flight. They cleaned the blood from Will's face and body, but Hannibal can imagine it.

Hannibal picks up his sketchbook. The last drawing was of a house, one that he couldn't stop thinking about until he sketched it from memory in the night. In Italy, nestled in the hills outside Florence. Hannibal turns the page and starts to sketch Will, as Hannibal remembers him yesterday, feral and alive.

"Hannibal," Alana says from the doorway. Hannibal turns to look at her. She looks tired as she smiles wryly, "I didn't expect you to come in. He can't exactly participate in therapy right now."

"I came to see how he was doing," Hannibal says, standing. "As a friend."

"Careful," Alana says, "Sounds like you're getting attached."

"Perhaps I am," Hannibal says, "It is easy to get attached to him."

"He's getting transferred," Alana says, leaning on the doorway. "That orderly lost her ring finger, clean through. Chilton says he has to go."

“Where?” Hannibal asks.

“Somewhere on the West Coast,” Alana says with a shrug, “They’re going to keep him under, like this.”

“They’re going to keep him in a coma,” Hannibal says.

“I mean what other choice do we have Hannibal?” Alana says, meeting his gaze. He can sense it now. Will has shifted out of her pack. He is a threat now. “Will is a danger to those around him and there aren’t a lot of options left.”

Hannibal looks down at Will, imagines him like this, immobilized, dreaming, forever. Growing old and grey in a hospital bed, unable to move. No. He won’t let that happen.

“When?” Hannibal asks, looking at Alana.

“Next week,” Alana says. “As soon as possible basically.”

Hannibal nods. He closes his sketchbook and brushes past Alana. He has many things to do.

***

Will is in the mud, somewhere cold and beautiful. He can see the sun, the silt, through the lazy moving water. He feels a catfish brush past his thigh. Under here he doesn’t need to breathe, couldn’t if he wanted to. The catfish swims into the silt and he sees her, coming towards him through the water like a ghost, but she is real in this moment.

“I hate you,” Abigail says. Blood flows from her mouth, clouding the water red, catching and scattering the light. Her blue shirt is stained dark and ominous. Here her hair almost seems to

glow, the brown of it looking almost wine red. Her arm hangs at an unnatural angle, her head depressed on one side.

“I’m sorry,” Will says. He doesn’t know what else to say. He always says the same thing.

“I don’t care,” Abigail says. “It doesn’t mean anything.”

“It could,” Will says.

“It can’t,” Abigail says. Abigail transforms before his eyes, shrinking and changing. A finch. Blood drips from her yellow beak. “I’m not real. You’ll never get to tell her.”

***

In the end it’s easy. Hannibal waits until Alana is off work, and then he walks into the hospital. He tells the nurses he is taking Will to the airport nearby for the transfer. They look at him strangely but no one questions his easy smile, his soft voice, his doctors coat and badge. Hannibal uncuffs and lifts Will, Still as the dead, weighing no more than a child, and sets him in the wheelchair Hannibal procured. Hannibal carefully cuffs Will to it, hanging his IV from the hook. The chair leans back and Hannibal straps Will to it so he won’t fall out.

“I’m sorry my dear,” Hannibal murmurs, gently brushing Will’s hair out of his face. “These things are necessary for the ruse.”

“Hannibal,” Chilton says from the doorway. Hannibal looks up. The wolf is here, capitalizing on weak prey, circling the herd protecting its vulnerable. “What are you doing?”

“I’m taking him to the gardens,” Hannibal lies, easily, looking for an opening. Chilton is doing the same.

“He can hardly enjoy them,” Chilton says with a smirk, baring his teeth. “He’s on enough sedative to kill a horse.”

“I should hope not,” Hannibal says. “We wouldn’t want any more injury than has already happened.” Hannibal pauses, “How is the nurse?”

“Jillian?” Chilton says with a shrug, “She’ll live.”

His eyes flash, dangerous and bright. Hannibal moved right, he can see the disgust in Chilton’s eyes. He despises creatures beneath him, much as Hannibal does, but Hannibal is not cruel. After all, frightened and beaten cows make bad beef.

“I suppose I was right, though,” Chilton says with a smirk. Hannibal doesn’t blink. Chilton finishes, gesturing at Will’s unconscious body, “They either hood the falcon or destroy it.”

Hannibal does not explain the intricacies of falconry to Chilton. Instead he smiles, genuine and easy, sliding it on as easily as swapping out a ring or grabbing a new glass from a cabinet.

“I’m going to take him outside now,” Hannibal says, gripping the handles of Will’s chair. “I’m afraid our chat has cut into my and Will’s session time.”

“Will’s session,” Chilton mutters, like it’s a joke. Like Will isn’t a person, just another piece of furniture, as interesting as taxidermy. Perhaps enough for a long glance, but no more.

Hannibal wheels Will out. After Chilton there are no alarms, no sneaking in the dead of night. Hannibal simply unstraps Will and lifts him into his car, laying him in the folded down passenger seat on his makeshift bed. The wheelchair is packed into the trunk. Hannibal takes off his doctor’s coat.

Hannibal checks his watch. In an hour his house will catch fire, an errant wire sparking an electric fire. The body inside will be so charred it is nearly unrecognizable, the teeth

matching his own forged dental records. Hannibal drives the hour to a nearby private airstrip, used mostly by hobbyists. Chiyoh is waiting.

“This is him?” Chiyoh asks when she sees Will, crossing her arms.

“He is,” Hannibal says.

Chiyoh doesn’t say anything else. Hannibal carries Will into the small plane, strapping them both into the backseat. Chiyoh starts the propeller and hops inside. Hannibal cradles Will’s head so he won’t be jostled by the takeoff. Hannibal brushes the hair from Will’s face again.

“Soon,” Hannibal says, “Soon we will be far from here. You will want for nothing. I promise you this, *mano širdis* .”

***

Will wakes up. For the first time in a long time. It feels like coming out of a fog. He’s lying in a bed so soft he barely recognizes he’s lying on anything at all. The sheets are soft, not silky, but still light. He sits up. The room is beautiful, blue walls and beams of dark wood crossing the ceiling, some of them carved with small flowers and vines. Two tall windows flank his left, beyond them he can see rolling green hills, a stone garden, sage green trees, and beyond that bluish mountains against the lighter blue sky dotted with fluffy clouds.

Will looks to his right and feels a twinge of pain in his leg. It seems to be broken. Will winces. Beside him, a man is resting, seemingly fallen asleep at his bedside in a dark oak chair matching the trim. Will searches for a name. Hannibal. Hannibal Lecter. Will takes in his features, crisp now he can really see Hannibal. Sharp cheekbones and the start of crow's feet around his eyes, thin prominent lips, the first wisps of grey showing in his hair. As Will watches Hannibal starts to wake.

“Will,” Hannibal says. He’s smiling. It’s… soft. “How are you feeling my dear?”

“My dear?” Will echoes. The familiarity, it doesn’t match. His memories are fuzzy, he remembers a hospital, being tied down. His head starts to hurt.

“You don’t remember?” Hannibal says, his face falling. “Yes… I suppose you wouldn’t.”

“Remember what?” Will asks.

“You’ve been in an accident,” Hannibal says. “The doctors, they said you might not remember anything.” Hannibal folds his hands. “My name is Hannibal Lecter, we’ve been dating for two years. You moved in with me last winter, after Abigail, your daughter, passed away. You were driving into town when a truck ran a stop light and hit your car, drivers side. You dislocated your shoulder, broke your hand in one place and your leg in two places, hit your head very hard. It was,” Hannibal takes a breath and breaks Will’s gaze, as if he couldn’t hold it for long, “It was very touch and go for a while.”

Will sits back against the pillows. The shady memories he has, hospitals, being tied down, and before that, living in a cabin in dark woods. Nothing like this. Nothing with Hannibal before the hospital.

“I don’t remember it,” Will says. “I remember… Virginia.”

“You lived there before moving to Italy,” Hannibal supplies. “Abigail was studying there.”

“How did she die?” Will asks.

“Ovarian cancer,” Hannibal says, “Rare for someone so young. She lived with us, and did not get to complete her degree.” He looks out the window. “She was… so very bright.”

Will looks out the windows too. It seems so strange. He doesn’t remember Italy. He barely remembers Abigail. How could he forget her? He tries to imagine her, here in Italy, watching the same clouds.

“Why did I move?” Will asks.

“A change of scenery, getting away from case work,” Hannibal says. “You worked as a professor in the city, in Florence.”

“Criminology,” Will says softly. He remembers being a professor.

Hannibal smiles wide. “I’m glad you remember. What else, if you can. Please, *mano širdis* .”

“I remember a hospital, being tied down,” Will says. “I remember…” he searches and searches, “I remember hurting people.”

Hannibal’s face changes again, sad, Will thinks. “They said you might have false memories, especially with your gift.”

“I can see other people,” Will says. “See what they really are.”

“You had nightmares,” Hannibal says, “Working with the FBI in America… it left deep scars on you.”

Will nods. He doesn’t know what else to do.

“Are you hungry?” Hannibal asks.

“I am,” Will says, as he does he realizes how hungry he is.

“Wait here *mano širdis* ,” Hannibal says.

He stands and leaves the room. Will watches the clouds. Hannibal comes back with a tray; a small cup of pills, a bowl of something, a glass of water.

"Here," Hannibal says, setting the breakfast tray on Will's lap. Two legs fold out from underneath it, keeping the full weight from resting on his injured leg. "Congee. It's rice porridge made with fresh chicken and ginger. It has preserved egg and green onion in it. It's supposed to feel comforting."

Will looks down. It smells amazing, soft and warm and a little spicy in the way ginger is. True to Hannibal's word it has some green onion cut finely and sprinkled on top, a piece of black boiled and preserved egg poking out of the thick surface.

"And your medicine," Hannibal says. "Mostly for pain."

Will raises his hand, but one is in a sling and one is in a cast. Hannibal pulls the chair close and takes a spoonful of the soup and offers it to Will.

"Open," Hannibal says gently. It doesn't feel like a command coming from him.

Will tastes the congee. It is wonderful, warm and thick but not heavy, with salty hints of soy sauce and ginger. Will lets Hannibal feed him the whole bowl. It feels… intimate. Natural. Will is starting to believe they were a real couple. He can feel how much Hannibal cares for him as he brushes an errant drop of rice from Will's chin with a napkin. Hannibal helps Will take his meds and then takes the tray.

"Rest," Hannibal says, in that same gentle voice, "I will be back soon, I only need to wash the dishes."

Will lays back against the cushions. He looks out the window for a while before feeling himself grow tired. Will snuggles down among the blankets, sinking down into the large and comfortable bed. Maybe this is his life. Maybe he lives a charmed life with a partner who loves him in rural Italy, maybe they're happy here. Maybe he can be happy here.

Chapter End Notes

whoops will has POV now he isnt on 700 drugs. also sorry for the tone shift we're in italy now binches

Grounded and Giving, Darkening Scorn

Chapter Notes

> Hey so this is shorter. this story is going on hiatus. I know what I want to have happen next but I don't know how to pull it off (such is the plight of writers!) but I will hopefully be releasing a new story soon, also Hannigram, that I'm much more confident in. Sorry to do this to everyone, and thank you for reading with me so far.

Hannibal washes the dishes in the sink. He regrets having to break Will's leg, but he needed a reason Will couldn't leave the house yet beyond amnesia. Regrettable, but unavoidable. Hannibal looks out the window of the manor. They are free, and they are together at last, Hannibal and his heart, his *širdis* . Hannibal finishes washing the dishes and goes back to his study for a moment. The house is old and almost rustic in a way, with the wood beams on the ceiling and the rough corners to each open doorway.

The study, his sanctuary, is more ornate, being on the second floor and having a gabled ceiling and a chandelier of bronze. Hannibal had some of his things brought over, mostly books whose shelves cover the walls like paper, but some trophies could not be relinquished to the fire. Among them is a metal statue of a stag, which for now rests on the mantle. Hannibal fetches his sketchbook, and a copy of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* . Hannibal thinks the story is fitting, set in Italy, a story of tragedy and triumph.

When Hannibal returns to Will's room, Will is looking out the window, seeming not to have moved since Hannibal left.

"Will," Hannibal says gently as he enters, trying not to startle the other man.

"Hannibal," Will says. He sounds tired.

"I'm sorry I was gone a bit longer than anticipated," Hannibal says.

“It’s okay,” Will says, looking out the window again, “I think… I think I’m the kind of person that enjoys being alone with his thoughts.”

“Have you remembered anything?” Hannibal asks, opening his sketchbook. He did one of Will, aslee, and now he wants to capture the longing and confusion in Will’s face as he struggles to accept or reject the situation.

“No,” Will says, “Maybe? I remember Abigail. I remember her… bleeding.”

Hannibal nods, “She was in a hiking accident, when you first came to Italy. Her curiousness,” Hannibal smiles fondly, as if remembering something bittersweet, “She wandered off to look at something. She fell down the cliffside. Abigail was mostly okay, but there was a lot of blood.”

Will nods like he’s trying to fit that into the puzzle. Hannibal watches the gears turn in Will’s head. He can almost hear it, like a clock being wound.

“May I sketch you?” Hannibal asks.

“You’ve said that before,” Will says, turning to Hannibal suddenly.

“I used too sketch you a lot,” Hannibal says. He shows Will one of his sketches, one he did while Will was hospitalized, imagining what he would look like without his mask. “Since you are so loathe about pictures, *mano širdis* .”

“What does that mean,” Will says, “You’ve said it before.”

“It means “my heart” in Lithuanian, where I grew up,” Hannibal says. “It isn’t a common endearment, but since you were a professor of criminology and I a retired doctor it felt,” Hannibal chuckles, “It suits you.”

Will nods, then indicates the book. “What book is that?”

“ *Romeo and Juliet* ,” Hannibal reads off the cover, “By William Shakespeare.”

“The star crossed lovers,” Will says absently, looking back at the window.

“Some think it was a moral play,” Hannibal says, “A cautionary tale about the dangers of not marrying who your parents pick for you.”

“They wouldn’t have died,” Will says, still looking out the window, “If people hadn’t forced them to act so fast. They could have just broken up in a few years like the rest of us.”

“Or perhaps get married later and live a long and happy life,” Hannibal replies. “But teenage love is usually fleeting and fumbling. You cannot give another person yourself when you don’t know who you are.”

“Will you still love me,” Will asks after a while, “If I never remember you?”

Hannibal feels his heart flutter. He places a hand on Will’s bandaged one, gently as not to disturb it in its healing. Will looks at him, eyes blue in this light, meeting Hannibal’s amber ones.

“I will give you all of myself,” Hannibal says, “Whether you remember me or not I will love you. We can make new memories together, if you wish.”

Will doesn’t say anything. Hannibal finishes sketching Will and moves on to one of Abigail. Recently he looked up pictures of Abigail, mostly because he was curious. She was a very bright young woman. He decided to sketch her, to keep up the ruse yes, but also because she represents a hole, an unknown in Will’s becoming. The stress fracture that could spiral out and force open the stone cage around Will’s true nature. Hannibal moves to sketch her as he can imagine her from what little Will has told him, what he learned in his searching. She is

looking out a window much as Will has. On a whim Hannibal adds a finch beyond the window, perched in a tree.

“Can I go outside?” Will asks. In the real world it has started to get dark, the sky ablaze with red and orange.

“We can go to the back terrace if you wish,” Hannibal says, adding the shine to Abigail’s curtain of hair. “I’m afraid I will have to push you in the chair. Would you mind doing it tomorrow? It is getting rather late.”

Will lays down in the bed more, shuffling under the covers.

“Read to me then?” he asks.

Hannibal smiles. “As you wish *mano širdis* .”

He eases the book open gently and begins to read. Will slowly starts to doze. Hannibal closes the book and stands, gently sweeping the hair from Will’s face. He truly is beautiful when he sleeps. Hannibal leaves to prepare dinner, so that even cold it will be available when WIll inevitably wakes. Hannibal decides to make a beautiful dinner for sometime in the next few days, a welcoming gift for Will. He selects a farmer from the land nearby in his mind, one who looked snidely at Will as they switched cars outside the city. The man would make a perfect sacrifice for their new home, a first of many to come.

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